A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, August 30. 1709.

IT is not indeed very kind to you all, to propose one Piece of Charity in the Neck of another; nor would I be an Instrument in the least, to hinder the great Article of Charity that is before you at this Juncture, and which I have said so much to excite you to; but I have a Piece of Charity in my Thought, that I am perswaded, every good Man in the Nation would contribute to most freely, and not think their Money ill bestow'd.

The QUEEN, whose Thoughts seem entirely bent to make us happy, among the many other Instances her Majesty has given of her Concern for the Good of her Subjects, and to procure general Blessings for them, has shown, that it has not been the least of her concern for their Reformation, for the suppressing scandalous Vices, porphane and corrupt Practices, and stopping the strong Current of the Nations Immoralities. That this is one of the best Steps to make the Nation happy and flourishing, I need spend none of your Time about, since however GOD's Blessings are not to be expected FOR our Reformation, I am sure, I see little Reason we have to expect them WITHOUT it.

In the Prosecution of this Blessed Purpose of the QUEEN's, Her Majesty, besides her Encouragement of Example, and

and being Herſelf a Pattern of Vertue to her Subjects; beſides the diſcouraging Immoralities by the Royal Authority in her Majeſty's Houſhold, beſides the ſuppreſſing Vice by Proclamation, and forbidding the lewd, riotous Meetings of looſe People, for propagating Immoralities, ſuch as at *May* Fair, *&c.* has thought fit to ſuſpend, at leaſt for the preſent, and we hope it may tend to an entire Diſſolution of them, thoſe Houſes of Sin, and Nurſeries of Vice, the Theatres or Play-Houſes, of whoſe Practices the Nation has ſo long complain'd.

I will not deny, but publick Actings and Repreſentations may be in themſelves lawful, and in ſome Reſpects beneficial, were ſome Preliminaries adjuſted; and therefore, that I may not ſeem too Cynical in my Reformation, I ſhall offer ſome Preliminaries, upon which I might be content to capitulate with them ——— But I believe when they ſee them, they will deſpair of performing; they'll ſay, as the King of *France* ſays of ſurrendring *Spain*, *That it is not in their Power*. However, let them give us their two Play-houſes and their Patents, *as cautionary Towns for Security of the Performance*, and I am for making the Treaty with them, whenever they pleaſe.

Some of the Preliminaries, on which I would treat about reſtoring them, ſhould be;

1. That no immodeſt, indecent Words or Geſtures be us'd in ſuch Repreſentations; no ſacred Thing jeſted with, or ſacred Office ridicul'd——— That Vice be always hiſs'd off the Stage, and treated with Contempt; all vertuous Actions and Perſons applauded and exalted, and the general Bent of the Actors be to repreſent the Deformities of Crime, and the Beauties of a vertuous and upright Behaviour.
2. That the Taſte of the Town ſhall be chang'd——That the Ladies ſhall no more love to be made bluſh in the Boxes for (we know Bluſhing has long ſince been baniſh'd from the Galleries) That Bawdy and Blaſphemy ſhall no more pleaſe the Auditory—That they ſhall make right Judgments of Things, and never take Prophaneneſs for Wit, clap a nafty Jeſt, and like the Repreſentations of Lewdneſs, under the Foppiſh Diſguiſes of Love and Gallantry. I grant, this is a very hard Article, but the Difficulty has this Advantage in it, That while this laſt Article is un-reform'd—do but ſecure the Players to reform the firſt, and you effectually ſuppreſs the Stage, for no Body will give *6 d.* to ſee a Play.

I could give you more Preliminaries, but I think theſe ſufficient, for either of them obtain'd will effectually do the Work. I you reform the Players, I tell you, you undo them, no Body will come to the Houſe; while Modeſty governs there, they will have no Trade; the Audience will be ſo thin, it will not pay for ſnuffing the Candles——The Authors will be ſtarv'd, and the Poet's third Day will not hire him a Garret to die in; *the Effect of which is to make him ſtudy for a more honourable Place to depart in*, I mean the G———s ——— *But of that hereafter* ——— For a Poet to write modeſtly, and make a ſober Play—there will be no Wit in it—'twill pleaſe no Body, the Man will be undone.

But let him Blaſphemy and Bawdy write,
The Modeſt and the Vertuous all will buy't;
The bluſhing Virgin likes and longs to look,
And plants the Poem next her Prayer-Book.

And

And here by the way, I must do some Justice to the Actors, and it will help a little to prepare you for the good Usage I am proposing for them, and it is nothing but what I have noted formerly in my Observations on this Subject —— As in the common Vices of the Nation, 'tis not so much the Common-People, as the Gentry, Clergy, and Magistrates, that are the Authors of our general Debaucheries, by their encouraging the Crimes of the meaner Sort in their Example, *so really and honestly*, (tho' perhaps you will think it a little too plainly speaking) it is not so much the vicious Inclination of the Poets that compose, or the Actors that represent a Comedy, which leads them to the abhorr'd Scenes of Lewdness, to the prophane Ribaldry, the lewd Jests, and the long Roll of their bantering Religion, exposing naked Vertue, and debauching by these Things that very Language they pretend to refine——— As it is the absolute Necessity they are in to do thus, or be undone—— The vicious Appetite of the Town is so debauch'd, that nothing else will please them; if you will not provide for them, that they may laugh at Religion, banter Things Sacred, and see their Maker insulted; if they cannot have this to laugh at in the Play, they laugh at the Poet; and if you don't bring them in some bawdy Story, expose Modesty, and represent a vertuous Woman as an unbred Thing, dress her up for a Country Girl that knows nothing, as if our Modesty were only the Effect of Ignorance, and Want of Breeding: If such Things as these do not take up the Auditory, they shall have no Auditory, they'll hiss a modest Play as dull and insipid Stuff, not at all entertaining; that has no Plot in it, no Wit, nor any thing that will bear Seeing: If it be fulsome in Language, vile in Design, and beastly in Acting, 'tis clapt and applauded, and the Poet ador'd—— The poor Poets and Players then are at a Pinch; they must please you, or you won't come near them; they must gratifie your debauch'd Taste, or you will not taste at all. Like your Taylors, they must make your Cloaths in the Fashion, or you'll make them pay for the Stuff; and thus they are oblig'd to be wicked, to please the wicke Inclination of the Auditory, and to avoi their own Ruin and Disgrace.

Now, because the Mischief lies thus divided between the Actors and the Audience, I have thought of a *Medium* to correct the Mischief in the last, by removing the Mischief of the first——and yet leave no Complainers either on one side or t'other; and this I shall speak to in my next.

But before I quit this Part of it, I cannot omit speaking to the Reason generally given, why her Majesty has thought fit to suspend their Acting at this Time——— And it's plain, in an Orderon the other side, directing earnest Prayers to be made in all Churches, at the usual Times of Publick Prayer, for the Success of her Majesty's Arms, and bringing this bloody and dangerous War to a happy Conclusion; Now her Majesty, who never us'd to trifle with her Maker, and who abhorrs mocking GOD, however it is with her less religious People, does not think, that Plays, Comedies, Opera's, and such like Divertisements, make any Harmony with Prayers, Confession of National Crimes, and Actions of general Humiliation joyn'd with earnest Petition, such as those Prayers so appointed really import; and has therefore suspended their Acting, and in general put down their little depending Branches of Vice, the common Stage-players in other Places——— That nothing might be suffer'd to hinder the Nations serious Application, to that great Work which appears at this time much more suitable to our Circumstances.

This is an eminent Instance of the Piety and Devotion of your Sovereign, and a good Example to the whole Nation, that as has her Majesty has thought them ill suiting with a Time of National Judgment, so we might all think them ill-suiting with National Reformation, and may become humble Suitors to her Majesty, effectually to suppress them, in order to remove all the unhappy Consequences that have so long been found from them.

If any Man enquire, what the evil Consequences are, which attend the Play-houses, tho' such a Question would very be needless, I shall take a Time to answer it farther.

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ADVERTISEMENTS.

Juſt Publiſh'd,

THE Monthly Miſcellany, or Memoirs for the Curious, for *May*, 1709, Vol. III. Containing, *Foſſiliæ* Sheppeianæ *Catalogus. African* Plants. Plants growing about the *Cape* of *Good-Hope*. Of the Origine of the Art of *Writing*. Continuation of the Diſcourſe of *Languages*. GOD farther vindicated, from the Aſperſions of thoſe of the *Upper* and *Lower* Way. Eſſay on Duelling, continu'd. Printed for *J. Woodward*, in St. *Chriſtopher*'s Church-Yard, *Thread-needle-Street*; and Sold by *John Morphew*, near *Stationers-Hall*.

*** Thoſe for *June* and *July* will follow ſpeedily.

Lately Publiſh'd,

Selectarum de Lingua Latina Obſervationum Libri duo. Prior inſcribitur Latini loquendi Norma; *h. e. aurei Latinitatis Seculi* Locutio. *Poſterior Barbare vitioſeve loquendi Conſuetudinem inveſtigat, patefacit, emendat. Uterque in Uſum Juventutis, incorruptæ Latini Sermonis Integritatis ſtudioſæ, confectus. Ductu & Cura* JOANNIS KER. *Londini, apud* J. Robinſon, J. Lawrence, C. Bateman, A. Bell, & J. Hartley, *Bibliopolas Londinenſes.*

Juſt publiſh'd,

A New Deſcription of the World, delineating *Europe*, *Aſia*, *Africa*, and *America*; with a Map and Tables of the Empires, Kingdoms, Provinces, and Cities therein, together with a Chronological and Hiſtorical Account of the Emperors, Kings, Princes, Governments, Religion, Languages, Cuſtoms, Commodities, Revolutions, and Rareties thereof. The ſecond Edition. By *H. Curſon*, Gent. Sold by *J. Woodward*, in St. *Chriſtopher*'s *Church-Yard*, in *Threadneedleſtreet*.

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N. B. His Mother, the Widow of the late Mr. *Chriſtopher Bartlett*, lives at the Place above mention'd, and is very ſkilful in the Buſineſs of her own Sex.